<u>In the Claims:</u>

Please amend Claim 34 as follows. Claims 1-14 and 26-33 have been withdrawn due to a restriction requirement and will be canceled if the application is otherwise ready to issue.

1 - 14. (Withdrawn)

15. (Original) A method for associating auxiliary data with an image, the method comprising:

extracting a steganographic reference to auxiliary data in the image;

querying a metadata database to request the auxiliary data associated with the image using the extracted reference to access the auxiliary data in the metadata database; and

receiving the auxiliary data from the database.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15 including:

using the auxiliary data received from the database to create an image file including the image and the auxiliary data.

17. (Original) The method of claim 15 including:

sending authentication data to the metadata database to request access to the auxiliary data associated with the image.

18. (Original) The method of claim 15 including:

sending a request to the metadata database to edit the auxiliary data associated with the image.

19. (Original) A computer readable medium having software for performing the method of claim 15.

20. (Original) A method for associating auxiliary data with an image, the method comprising:

maintaining a database of auxiliary data items associated with images, each item being associated with an image via a reference steganographically encoded in the image;

from a requesting application, receiving a request for auxiliary data associated with an image, the request including a reference extracted from the image;

using the reference to locate the auxiliary data associated with the image in the database; and

returning the auxiliary data corresponding to the reference to the requesting application.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20 including:

determining whether the requesting application has access rights to the requested auxiliary data.

22. (Original) The method of claim 20 including:

determining whether the requesting application has editing rights for the requested auxiliary data.

23. (Original) A computer readable medium having software for performing the method of claim 20.

24. (Original) A method for associating auxiliary data with an image, the method comprising:

maintaining a database of steganographic links and metadata databases associated with the steganographic links;

from a requesting application, receiving a steganographic link extracted from an image, the link referencing auxiliary data about the image;

using the steganographic link to locate a metadata database that stores the auxiliary data associated with the image; and

forwarding the steganographic link to the metadata database that stores the auxiliary data associated with the image.

25. (Original) A computer readable medium having software for performing the method of claim 24.

26 – 33. (Withdrawn)

34. (Currently Amended) An image database accessible on the internet, permitting storage of images from plural unrelated consumers, characterized in that the database maintains – for each of several images – a history file detailing [the] vendors from whom a consumer has requested service relating to an image.

35. (Original) A method of maintaining a transaction history for image processing transactions on images, the method comprising:

maintaining a transaction history of an image stored on a networked device;

in response to receiving a transaction request to process an image stored on the networked device, updating the transaction history of the image by adding data about the transaction to the transaction history.

36. (Original) The method of claim 35 including:

associating the transaction history with the image through a link between the image and the transaction history.

37. (Original) The method of claim 36 wherein the link is a steganographic link embedded in the image.